

AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS -- PROJECT DESCRIPTION

COLORADO: THE YAMPA RIVER BASIN

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AREA/SCOPE/ATTRIBUTES

The Yampa River Basin in northwestern Colorado is one of the most hydrologically and biologically intact watersheds in the West. Good stewardship and conservation of these lands and waters – both public and private – is critical to ensuring strong local economies built around ranching, wildlife and recreation that contribute greatly to the economic and ecological health of the state of Colorado and the Colorado River basin as a whole. Specific conservation values include:

- Viable agricultural and ranching operations;
- Healthy riparian and floodplain communities along major water courses, including sandhill crane, blue heron and bald eagle roosting and nesting habitat;
- Four federally-endangered native fish that inhabit the Yampa River and its tributaries;
- Sufficient water within the Yampa River basin and opportunities to creatively meet the consumptive and non-consumptive needs of people and nature
- The largest naturally flowing river in Colorado, hosting high quality recreational experiences for boaters and fisherman
- Vital winter habitat for Colorado's second largest elk herd, and large deer herds, making the area a world-class hunting destination

SUCCESS TO DATE

There is a long history of collaboration among agriculture, recreation, and conservation interests in the Yampa River Basin. Successes to date include:

- 61,485 acres of private land on 131 different properties placed under conservation easement in the greater Yampa and White River valleys;
- Extensive public/private investment in the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program;
- Creation of the Yampa River State Park, recreation improvements at Elkhead Reservoir, and extension of the Yampa River Trail
- Construction of a new visitors center at Dinosaur National Monument (Utah entrance), which will spur tourism in the Yampa River Basin

NEXT STEPS

Through the America's Great Outdoors Initiative (AGO), the Department of the Interior and other federal agencies will work with the State, local stakeholders, private landowners, and other partners to help conserve healthy lands and waters and promote outdoor recreation and tourism in the Yampa River Basin. By building on the Colorado Headwaters and Rivers Initiative and aligning federal, state, and local public and private land conservation interests, this AGO project will support conservation easements, stewardship projects and other tools that provide economic and conservation benefits, and promote outdoor recreation and tourism.

The State of Colorado, and their many partners involved in this project, have already identified clear near-term and long-term objectives for this project, such as the protection of an additional 10,000-12,000 acres of habitat and riparian corridors over the next two years; reconnecting headwaters stream habitat; and combating invasive species. The stronger and better coordinated federal partnership afforded by AGO will help leverage current resources to increase the pace and scale of accomplishments, including the voluntary conservation of working agricultural lands, investment in forest management and wildlife corridors, and support for a diverse and sustainable outdoor recreation economy.